



C O S T A G U A N A
incorporating
E F G I A R T
a.k.a.
A E F G I R T

Volumén Diez, Número Cinco

el 2^{do} de junio de 1985

¡Hola! Esto se llama COSTAGUANA, una revista de DIPLOMACY de correos y desperdicios desencantados, publicado por Conrad F. von Metzke, 4374 Donald Avenue, San Diego, CA 92117, EE.UU. Teléfono: En casa, (619) 276-2937. A la oficina, (619) 566-2170 o 566-2190. Prefiero que use el número de casa, sino no sea posible, puede llamarme desde las 8,00 hasta las 17,00 hs. en mi trabajo.

Cuesta de juego, \$7US, incluyendo la revista por todo el juego. Me gustaría muchísimo en cambiar su revistita por la mía, todos números por lo igual. Suscripciones (sin juego) c22US por cada.

Wenn Sie nicht alles verstehen haben, dann schreiben Sie mir (auf Deutsch, Spanisch, Polnisch, Russisch oder - Gott sei Dank! - Englisch)!

ERIC DEPARTMENT: Eric P., precocious little slime creature that he is, does not yet (at 3 1/2) read or write yet. But he does know a few words, and tonight he showed off with his magnetic blackboard and his magnetic letters. First he announced, "I'm going to spell 'Eric,'" and he did. It looked like this:

C I R E

Then he proclaimed: "I'm going to spell 'Ross,'" following which he bellowed, "I'm going to spell 'zoo.'" Those words looked like this:

R O S S

Z O O

At that point, Eric's two-year-old friend Vanessa, who was visiting, wandered up and got interested. She reached in the letter box, grabbed the first thing she touched, and put it up on the board. Eric, who had been watching while Vanessa played, suddenly grabbed Vanessa's contribution off the board and bellowed. "No, Vanessa, no! There's no '5' in 'zoo!'"

ROSS DEPARTMENT: The other day, Eric woke up from his nap in a foul mood. It seems that mommy and both boys had gone to the toy store to buy invitations and supplies for Ross' upcoming birthday party, and had informed both children in advance that there would be no toys bought. Once in the store, Eric was not happy that he really wasn't getting even a token toy, but that's the way it ended up; he got nothing. So he came home unhappy, went to bed unhappy, and woke up unhappy. To quote Eric as he woke up: "I want a toy car!"

Ross heard this, climbed into Eric's bed, and gave his brother the following lecture, which I report as close to verbatim as I can.

"Eric, we're not made out of money! Sometimes when we go to the store and we have extra money, we can buy cars; but sometimes we don't have enough money, so we can't have cars! Understand?"

"Now, I'm going out in the living room for five minutes. You think about it, and then I'll come back and find out how much you've learned about money!"



"Would you mind if I took a picture of you all as a group?"

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GAME 1983HK - THE AMBIDEXTROUS AARDVARK - Winter 1906

ENGLAND (R.Anderson): Builds f lvp, f edi. Has: a's den, bel; f's lvp, edi, nth, swe, eng (7).

FRANCE (Rauterberg): Retreats f mid-iri. Removes a's par, pic. Has: a bre; f iri (2).

GERMANY (Keller): Removes f bal. Has: a mun; f hol (2).

ITALY (D.Anderson): Retreats a gal-vie, f gre-alb. Builds f nap. Has: a's ser, bur, vie, bud, tyo; f's nap, alb, por, mid, mar, ion (11).

RUSSIA (Egli): Has: a's kie, mos, sil, gal; f ber (5).

TURKEY (Touchette): Builds f smy. Has: a's ukr, rum, bul; f's smy, bla, gre, aeg (7).

Note that Robert Anderson announces the following new address: 320 Oceana, Oscoda, MI 48750.

Spring 1907 moves are due Saturday, ²⁹~~22~~ June 1985. I have orders on hand (which you may change if you wish, of course) from all save England and France.

(SEE ALSO PG. 8)

A CONFESSION: Years ago, one of the finest Gamesmasters in the history of postal Diplomacy told me something that I pooh-poohed. Doug Beyerlein said that, no matter how comfortable he might feel with a particular game situation, he always set the positions up on the board and played out the season for every adjudication; by so doing, he avoided mistakes. When he told me this, I smiled pompously and mumbled something about how that was all well and good, but any Gamesmaster who knew the board could do it in his head...which is, of course, the way I've done it for years.

The 'confession' part of this is that, during the time this incarnation of COSTA has been going, there is no other way I could have adjudicated the games. I do not own a Diplomacy set. I don't even have a conference map; in truth, it has been at least five years since I've even seen the game board, and I haven't been involved as a player for even longer. So there's the occasional error; so what? We all make mistakes....

Well, I've changed my mind. This issue contains reports of two errors in two games. One of them is fairly minor, and nobody will be upset about that one. The other, however, could have caused problems if I hadn't caught it (by pure chance, I might add) and notified everyone. More to the point, the latter mistake is one that could not have happened at all IF ONLY I HAD SET UP THE GAME AND LOOKED AT IT!

That, plus a quick perusal of the error reports in recent issues, did it. I have now gone out and bought a game. I will do it Doug's way from here on. It can hardly hurt; and it's just possible, allowing for my slipping mental faculties, that it will help....

WESTDAVEYDELEONHENSONESTRADALANDISWAGONERSTEINSMITHBANKSDEMETRIODIAZHAUSE

A Plea to
STOP SUCKING FAGS!!!

It used to be the 'in' thing among Diplomacy publishers to play April Fool jokes - fake issues, and the like. (You'll note I didn't do it this year.) In my day, I propounded two "classic" April Fool jokes of my own. One involved producing (in collaboration with John Leeder and Michel Liesnard) a phony issue of MOESHOESHOE, a journal published in Belgium! Michel Feron printed the thing in both French and English. I write no French, but Leeder and Liesnard do, so they wrote the French portions; I wrote the English material and typed the issue; and after printing the fake, I sent the finished copies to Liesnard, who in turn addressed them and posted them from Feron's home town of Hannut. It was a real slam-banger! (God!, do I wish I still had a copy of that item!)

But in a way, even this real zinger was outweighed by my other one. In one issue of COSTAGUANA in the mid-'seventies, I wrote a front page editorial announcing that the games would all have to be transferred forthwith because, presumably because I had been smoking heavily for many years, I had been diagnosed as having lung cancer and was given not more than a few months to live.

Expressions of support and sympathy, offers of help, 'phone calls, you name it - I was flooded. Fred Davis called from Baltimore, and in the first fifteen seconds of the conversation I knew that he was more upset than he'd been in many years. Hal Naus called and offered to take all the games and help me personally in any way he could. John Fleming in New York wrote and offered indefinite free room and board if I had any interest in taking my case to the experts at Sloan-Kettering. My best friend in all Diplomacy, the late

Bob Ward, also offered help and support - only he delivered his offer in person. (As he told it, he tried calling twice, but I was out both times. So he took time out of his law studies, hopped a plane from Sacramento and showed up on my doorstep!) There were many more calls and letters too (including a couple of get-well cards). Only one person, John Coleman of Ontario, caught that it was a "joke" and wrote a note calling me on it.

Well, there was one grain of truth to that article. Medical science has pretty well proven that, if I keep on smoking the Noxious Weed, I may very well get lung cancer one of these days. Even if I don't, numerous other thrilling maladies await that could easily take me down the same road. And so I've made an effort.

I QUIT!

On May 22d, I made a big public display at work of casting aside my last cigarette, and have been on a struggling crusade ever since. There have been problems, and I admit to having cheated; but, after every slip-up I've started the battle over again, and at this writing (May 31) the distance from the last 'cheat' is now four days. If I screw up again, I fully intend to go right back and try some more. And I'll keep this up as long as it takes.

Now; who would like to join me?

DONOVANBOWMANSTILWELLGELLEDIXEYWALTERSTAGABANMAYLASTURNBULLNATALARAYFONTANILLA

GAME 1984HI - THE EXTROVERTED EMU - Winter 1903

First, the screw-up; Inasmuch as Germany is sitting in Edinburgh, it is logical to presume that he owns the supply centre. Therefore, England has a removal and Germany another build (except o place to put it).

Now on to the player turnover: Matt Johnston stays with us, for which I'm glad; but Jim Stevens is no longer with us and will be replaced as Turkey by Keith Sherwood, 8866 Cliffridge, La Jolla, CA 92037.

AUSTRIA (Pierce): Has: a's ank, gre, tyo, tri, rum, gal, bul; f aeg (8).

ENGLAND (Johnston): Removes a stp. Has: f's iri, lon, bar (3).

FRANCE (Fleming): Builds a par, f bre. Has: a's ven, bur, par; f's bre, mid, rom, eng (7).

GERMANY (Walker): Builds a ber, f kie. Has: a's ruh, mun, war, ber; f's kie, den, edi, nwy (8 - 1 short).

ITALY (Peel?): NMR, GM removes f ion. Has: a apu, f nap (2).

RUSSIA (Cartier): Removes a swe. Has: f bot (1).

TURKEY (Sherwood): Has: a's mos, sev; f's con, bla (4).

I see no profit in worrying about an Italian standby. Spring 1904 moves are due and payable on Saturday, June 27, 1985.

FRANCE TO GERMANY: "Evil isn't such a bad thing. After all, you know what the man said: 'In Italy for thirty years under the Borgias they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed. But they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci and the Renaissance. In Switzerland they had brotherly love. They had 500 years of democracy and peace. And what did that produce? The cuckoo clock!' See ya, Johnny...."

Orson Welles as Harry Lime in THE THIRD MAN

FRANCE TO JAMUL: What's that? You want press, not old movie reviews?

JAMUL TO FRANCE: No, no, old movie reviews are fine. At least they might be a step up from your press....

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PLUG TIME: Drop a note to John Walker, 4819 Corian Oak, San Antonio, TX 78219, and tell him you've heard excellent things about the two exciting variants he has in mind for his ALAMO CITY TIMES. (Did I ever mention that my father lived in San Antonio for a few years, back in the 'twenties? I have a family album full of snapshots of him in front of the Alamo.) One of John's greater coups d'etat is that he's conned your old editor into playing in one of them, maybe. Care to come along for the ride?

PLUG TWO: Matt Fleming, 4290 Chateau de Ville, St. Louis, MO 63129, has taken over a summertime orphan and may adopt more. He needs standby players, as do all newer publishers, but as far as I know has just one - me. You want some cheap fun? Join us....

PLUG THREE: Paul Rauterberg kindly sent a copy of his MIDLIFE CRISIS, and I am impressed. The sub rate is 10/\$5. Mine is cheaper, but Paul's effort is substantially larger and apparently a bit more (ahem) consistent. And it looks to be a bit of fun. Regular and variant games going, well handled and with a fair bit of cheery press. No mention of game openings just now, but they can't be too uncommon considering how many games are going. The perpetrator's address is 4922 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53208.

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Game Three - THE TERGIVERSATORY TAPIR - Spring 1902

- AUSTRIA (Walters): a tri-alb. a ser (s) RUS rum-bul. a bud-tri. a vie (s) bud-tri. f gre-aeg.
- ENGLAND (Peel?): NMR. a bel, f's lon, nth, mid (h).
- FRANCE (Walker): a par (s) mar-bur. a spa-gas. a mar-bur. f bre-pic. f por-mid.
- GERMANY (Caruso): a den-swe. a bur (s) ENG bel-pic. a mun (s) bur. a ber-sil. f hol-kie.
- ITALY (Pustilnik): a ven-tri. a tyo (s) ven-tri. f nap-ion. f tun (s) nap-ion.
- RUSSIA (Brown): a rum-bul. a gal-rum. a mos-sev. a war-gal. f sev-bla. f con (s) rum-bul. f swe (h).
- TURKEY (Cartier): a ank-con. a bul-gre. f aeg (s) bul-gre.

The Austrian fleet Greece is blasted to little bitty smithereenlets. There are no retreats.

Fall 1902 moves are due Saturday, June ²⁹~~22~~, 1985. I am asking that Matt Fleming, 4290 Chateau de Ville, St. Louis, MO 63129, send in standby moves for England.

The amount of press submitted for this game is just exactly as much as there are pieces left of the Austrian fleet.

Please note that John Caruso is now at 29-10 164 Street, Flushing, NY 11358.

GAME 1983AC - THE WISTFUL WOMBAT - Spring 1908

Well, first, back to Winter. The mistakes continue to mount; there are no fewer than three! Gasp....

First, France has a build to replace an annihilated piece. Second, Turkey has captured Naples from Austria; thus, Turkey has a build and Austria a removal.

So - here are the adjustments:

FRANCE builds f bre.

AUSTRIA removes a ven.

TURKEY builds F SMY.

As to the player roster, Matt Johnston is alive and well. Jim Stevens is presumably alive and well, but has nevertheless dropped out, so Italy is in anarchy.

Okay, so much for business. Now the moves:

AUSTRIA (Robson): a war-pru. a vie-gal. a bud (h). a pie-mar. a sil-mun.

a tyo (s) sil-mun. a boh (s) sil-mun. f tus-lyo.

ENGLAND (Pustilnik): a stp (h). a ber (s) pru. a kie (s) hel-hol. a pru
(s) Ber. f nth-eng. f bal (s) kie. f edi-nth. f bar-nwg. f hel-hol.

FRANCE (Johnston): a ruh (s) mun. a bur (s) mun. a mun (h). a mar (h).

f lyo-wes. f wes-tun. f spa sc - lyo. f bre-mid.

ITALY (anarchy): f tun (h).

TURKEY (Walters): a bul-ser. a lvn-war. a ukr (s) lvn-war. a mos (s) lvn-war.
f tyn-rom. f con-bla. f nap (s) tyn-rom. F SMY-AEG.

Austria's army in Warsaw exists no longer. No retreats.

Fall 1908 moves are due Saturday, ²⁹~~28~~d June 1985.

CONSTANTINOPLE TO VIENNA: Sorry, there was no other way. I can't stand boring Dip games.

JAMUL: Yes, I too was beginning to fall asleep. I mean, geez! Thirty-three units trying to divide up Tunis?

HUNTPECKHUNTPECKHUNTPECKHUNTPECKHUNTPECKHUNTPECKHUNTPECKHUNTPECKHUNTPECK

John Caruso brings up some interesting points in a letter I curtailed from last issue:

"Your new systems ((re: missed moves)) - #1 OK by me ((collect 'phone calls)); #2 ((sealed orders on file)) I'm not sure I like this rule. For starters, it's not the player's orders, nor is it a standby's orders. It's orders based on a player's guidelines. How are the other players supposed to negotiate? After all, it is a "Diplomacy" game. If you want to have "player's orders" on file, I see nothing wrong with it. But for a GM to be involved with writing orders for a player, even if that involvement is only selecting an anonymous order writer for the "guideline" player, seems wrong. Order-writing is the players' responsibility, not the GM's, or the GM's hand-chosen person. Why don't you scrap #2 in favor of something like: Players can keep standby orders on file for one turn, to insure that they don't NMR. There is a difference between writing the actual orders and writing general guides. I'm sure you can see the difference. The rule is more trouble than it's worth, and involves the GM too deeply into the players' part of the game."

Conrad again. I'd love to hear others' opinions on this.

I do see what you're driving at, John, but I am afraid I don't agree that there's any impropriety (or near-impropriety) involved. Here's why:

In terms of the lack of ability of other players to negotiate with the anonymous fill-in, you're obviously right, they can't. And therefore, such negotiated arrangements as a French support for an English move are not possible with anonymous orders for France. (I suppose I should have made it clear that, while a player may write any bloody thing he/she pleases into a sealed envelope, I am not going to get involved in honoring such statements as, "If Russia misses moves, show the anonymous player the Austrian orders and let the Russian move be coördinated.") Nevertheless, the anonymous player is going to be absolutely bound by whatever he/she finds inside the envelope. Keep in mind that I will have read the 'general orders' too, and if they say "My ally is Austria," I am not going to accept anonymous orders which stab Austria in the back. This is not going to be a problem, of course, because my anonymous players are friends who understand what their function is, and aren't interested in subverting a system designed to keep a game more smooth.

While it's true that you can't negotiate with a 'shadow player,' you can negotiate with the player of record for whom the shadow acts as agent. It is only logical to presume that a player will seal into the envelope only such guidelines as have been negotiated as the game goes along. You must keep in mind that sealed orders are strictly one-shot stopgaps, against the possibility that Fred Furd's letter is lost in the mail, or that Fred has an emergency appendectomy and can't send orders, or some such. If in fact Fred has dropped out, the issue will be moot because a standby will take over the following season. And if Fred comes back, he's going to have to answer for whatever was done on his authority.

As to the idea that the GM is getting overly involved in player matters, I don't buy this one at all. I can obviously agree to the impropriety if the GM acts as his own 'anonymous player,' which is of course theoretically possible (hell, I've done it!) (in fact, my long-standing habit of putting all Diplomacy mail, unopened, aside until after deadline is derived from the days of having to avoid knowing anyone's moves lest I have to make 'anonymous' moves myself). But the idea that there is anything untoward in merely selecting the person who shall make the moves, strikes me as a bit much. I am using players who are not in the game, and never will be. What difference is there, then, between my selecting an anonymous fill-in and my deciding which person on my standby list shall be asked to take over for a drop-out? In the present issue, Keith Sherwood has been assigned to take over a slot in 1984HI. I might as easily have asked two others on my list, Konrad Bau-meister or Lu Henry, but I didn't. Am I thus involving myself too intimately by selecting one person over another? I doubt it.

And finally, if you think my system is "more trouble than it's worth," I suggest that your alternative is far worse. Furthermore, your alternative is already in force in another, more manageable, form. It is very common for a player to send in the current move and a conditional, or tentative, move for the season after. You've done it yourself. It's a good fail-safe, and I encourage it; and it is understood that these advance 'tentatives' may be phrased as conditionally as needed to cover every eventuality. But I don't see where this improves upon my system (which was not, by the way, my own invention; many other GMs have used it over the years).

If anything, I'd be more inclined to scrap the collect 'phone call system as discriminating against those players who don't have 'phones or who can't afford to pay for long-distance calls. But I'm still open to argument; try persuading me further.

MARTINEZCORCORANCLARKALEXANDERRAVELOSCHORZMANSANTOSDODDBROWNPATTEETIERNEYMCCCLAIN

1983HK

Press, omitted from the game page owing to a misfile:

ITALY TO TURKEY: Do you want peace or a piece of me?

ITALY TO ENGLAND: Do you lie blatantly, or just lie and hope no one notices?

ITALY TO GERMANY: I can't help you any more. You must help yourself.

ITALY TO RUSSIA: I hope you write at least.

JAMUL TO ALL LISTENERS: I want blatant peace, but I can't help you write about it.

((NOTE TO BEYERLEIN'S PEOPLE: "JAMUL" is the press dateline used for the editor's contributions. If it is used, it means I wrote it. Players may not dateline their own contributions 'Jamul,' though any other dateline is allowed. In case you care, 'Jamul' is a small town thirty miles east of San Diego, and for many years COSTAGUANA emanated from "PO Box 35, Jamul." I never lived there; rather, I lived in Dulzura, an even smaller town another ten miles east. I rented the box in Jamul because it was more convenient for collecting mail; in my day, the latter had an official population of 1700 and was a stop of no particular importance on the eastern highway, surrounded by a bunch of farms. Today it is almost suburban, with over 10,000 people and no greater merit than it ever had. Dulzura was, and remains, nothing: A "town" of 250 with one store, one gas station, one realty office, one post office and one restaurant - all clustered in two old buildings.

((Jamul is pronounced 'Ha-MOOL.' I do not know what it means.))

BARTOLOMEJONESMCMACKINLAYWELLPETRONEABUTINKINZERQUIRANTEKAUHIPETERSONJOHNSON

GAME 1983CA - THE OLFACTORY OKAPI - Fall 1908

Oh God! Here goes nothing....

If you read the bit on Page 3 about how I don't own a Dip game and just went out and bought one, the fact is that I typed that before actually making the purchase. Unfortunately, I have since found that the best source I know is sold out, and I haven't yet gone to my alternate source to see what's available. Or, to put it another way - what follows was done in my head. So were all the other games, of course, but they were comparatively easy; this one ain't. So for heaven's sake CHECK IT THOROUGHLY. And I feel sure that, by next time, we'll have a game set to work with.

Item One: Austria is now played by Bill Quinn. He's welcome, but I dearly wish he'd assign a Boardman number to my Game Three....

Item Two: The retreats were: Aus a gal-vie, Ger f nth-nwg.

AUSTRIA (Quinn): a smy-con. a boh-gal. a vie (s) bud. a sil (s) boh-gal.
a bud (s) ITA tyo-tri. f aeg-bul s.

FRANCE (Bakken): a bur-bel. a par-bur. a pic (s) bur-bel. f nth-edl.
f lon (h). f eng (s) bur-bel. f lyo-spa s.

GERMANY (Menders): a ruh (s) bel. a bel (s) mun-bur. a mun-bur. a ber-mun.
f nwg-edl.

ITALY (Caruso): a tyo-tri. a ven-apu. f apu-adr. f ion-gre. f ank-bla.
f tyn-ion.

RUSSIA (Gorham): a ser (s) gal-bud. a rum (s) gal-bud. a war-sil. a gal-
bud. a den (h). a nwy (h). a sev-arm. a lvn-pru. f ska-nth.

The Austrian army Budapest is squished. The German army Belgium may retreat to Holland or follow Budapest into the eternal ether....

I have two proposals to end this game by vote. One declares the game a draw among France, Italy and Russia; the other decrees a five-way draw. Let's call them Proposition A (3-way) and Proposition B (5-way) and vote with next orders. I must receive at least one 'no' vote to kill the proposal; failure to vote counts as yes. If by chance both votes pass, I will call Prop. A the winner (3 way).

Centres:

A: vie, bul, smy, con (4). Remove one.
F: par, bre, mar, spa, por, bel, lvp, edi, lon (9). Build two.
G: ber, kie, mun, hol (4). Remove one.
I: rom, ven, nap, tun, ank, tri, gre (7). Build one.
R: stp, mos, war, sev, nwy, den, swe, rum, ser, bud (10). Build one.

Builds, removals, and the German retreat are due Saturday, June ²⁹~~22~~, 1985. You may, if you wish, make adjustments conditional on the retreat....

You might also care to have John Caruso's new address: 29-10 164 St., Flushing, NY 11358.

Wowee! Lookit all da press!

DIEBESUCHTDERALTENDAMEFRANKDERFÜNFTEDIEPHYSIKERDIEEHEDESHERRNMISSISSIPPI

Matt Fleming dropped me a note bubbling over about one of my great literary loves, the Swiss playwright Friedrich Dürrenmatt. It's quite nice to know that someone else has the same taste in German-language literature...Dürrenmatt is a prolific author of dramas, essays and short novels whose international reputation is by now quite secure. Influenced strongly by the "Theatre of the Absurd," of which the best known exponent is Eugene Ionesco, he has managed to restrain the 'absurd' impulses in the interests of dramatic sense and continuity. As but one example, one of Ionesco's silliest stage directions comes at a focal point in "The Bald Soprano," where - after a series of offstage bells has been called for - Ionesco directs, "The bell rings as often as it wishes." You cannot find such loose anarchy in Dürrenmatt; even at his closest to the genre ("Play Strindberg"), he will not loosen his control of the action to such a degree. When his characters rush toward absurdity ("Romulus the Great" and its incessant prattling about chickens), they go only just so far, and then they stop - well short of losing the thread of the plot, and thus the interest of the audience. For all his superficial resemblances to Ionesco and writers of that ilk, Dürrenmatt is actually far closer to his great contemporary, Max Frisch, and his classically-oriented - almost measured - Austrian predecessor Hugo von Hoffmansthal. Ionesco is an existentialist mounting the stage; but Dürrenmatt is a dramatist of the existential. The distinction is massive.

For those who read no German, there is - possibly out of print, but available in most good libraries - a superb translation of four of his best major plays. Called, oddly enough, "Four Plays," it includes a translation of the excellent essay "Problems of the Theatre" and was published in 1964 in London by Jonathan Cape. The translations are by four different people,

and render to us the play which is often called Dürrenmatt's greatest ("The Physicists"), my own two favorites ("Romulus the Great" and "The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi"), and "An Angel Comes to Babylon" - the only Dürrenmatt play that I've never been able to like.

One might also check the shelves for his best-known play, "The Visit," which enjoyed a great success on Broadway as done by Lunt and Fontaine; for "Meteor," the best of his radio plays, a science-fiction drama illustrating the pathetic emptiness of current life as seen through a futuristic fantasy; "Play Strindberg," which owes much not only to its namesake but also to Agatha Christie; and the four 'mystery-story' novelets (of which "The Pledge" is the best) which have appeared in several paperback versions over the years.

Let it also be known that I have been crafting an opera, for the last five years, based on "The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi." The first version, a true opera somewhat in the tradition of Strauss and relying heavily on the thick orchestration typical of Bruckner, was scrapped two years ago in favor of a new version which nods in the direction of Schönberg. This is my life's great fantasy, my version of the novel we all plan to write but never have published. Most of us never actually write the novel; but of those who do, very few ever see it published. So it is with my opera; I don't expect that it will ever see the stage (unless I suddenly get rich and foot the bills), but at least it is down on paper. Actually, I've been luckier than some; because I sing well, I was able to slip in a couple of excerpts in a concert I did not long ago. (I also included a short bit from my other opera, "The Bride of Messina," which I finished ten years ago.) Reviews were best described as 'polite.'

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A new Diplomacy journal just plopped into my mailbox, and I must fill out my remaining space with an enthusiastic comment. IT'S A TRAP, published by Steve Knight, 11905 Winterthur Lane #103, Reston, VA 22091, strikes one at first glance as the most literate publication to come along in living memory. This man knows how to write the English language! Furthermore, he writes with an uncommon sense of style that augurs well for the future of the journal. He confesses to having been a music major, which grabs me instantly, of course. But he also puts forward his conception of postal Diplomacy (he also runs postal Soccer simulations) in precisely the sort of (if you will) liberal, humanistic way that has always hit a soft spot in my house. Just read the man's house rules; you'll see quickly that they're the sort I'd have written if I'd bothered writing any.

Game fees (regular Diplomacy, two games open) are \$5. plus a minimum \$5 NMR deposit. Soccer is cheaper. Subs (no one-for-one trades) are \$5 for ten. Mainly because of Steve's background in music, I am breaking my "absolute" rule against subscribing to magazines which won't trade, and getting in on this one. It is my feeling that you won't rue the decision if you do likewise.

KATZKESTREETERLOPEREDWARDSMANUELCORREABUCKTUPPERHARGETTBONNELLSMITHTIMMSKRUSE

And finally, a last-but-not-least Ross Story. Ross is studying the planets and the Solar System at the moment, and has gotten utterly fascinated. I have no idea what he's being taught insofar as the Origin of the Cosmos is concerned; I can only report that tonight, Ross asked me, "How do you think the Earth was made?" and then proceeded, without waiting for a reply, to tell me his version of the 'Big Bang' theory: "A whole bunch of dirt and a whole bunch of water and lots of air and big piles of cement blew up and bang! There was the Earth!"

Watch out, Fred Hoyle; here he comes!!!